

# Does the EU Have a Past?

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## Does the EU Have a Past? Narratives of European Integration History and the Union's Public Awareness Deficit

*Kiran Klaus PATEL, Alexandros SIANOS, Sophie VANHOONACKER*

The history of the European Union suffers from a public awareness deficit.<sup>1</sup> Partly, this has to do with the fact that, until recently, European integration has remained a rather small and self-contained field of historiography, while scholars of collective memory and political narratives have only of late commenced examining historical narratives and the politics of remembrance in an EU context.<sup>2</sup> More importantly, political initiatives have failed to nurture public interest in the topic, so that most citizens in the member states and beyond know little about the process that led to the creation of today's European Union. Even if the EU's importance for economic and other issues in our times is hardly doubted, Europeans themselves rarely feel the urge to study this chapter of history. Recent initiatives, such as the House of European History museum in Brussels and the multi-volume project of a history of the European Commission, try to bring about change, but remain projects that only reach small sections of the population.<sup>3</sup> In a time of Euroscepticism, neo-nationalism and populism, this lack of knowledge is problematic.

This article aims to make an initial contribution to furthering our understanding of the public visibility and media salience of European integration history since the

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1. This article results from the work of the Jean Monnet Centre for Excellence *HOMER – From History to Memory Culture: Narratives of the European Council Summits from The Hague (1969) to Maastricht (1991) and Lisbon (2009)* which Kiran Klaus Patel and Sophie Vanhoonacker have co-directed between 2014 and 2017. We are grateful to our other two co-directors, Wolfgang Wessels (University of Cologne) and Jürgen Mittag (German Sport University), to our students from the three participating universities, to Hartmut Marhold and to the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union. See also: <https://www.dshs-koeln.de/en/institute-of-european-sport-development-and-leisure-studies/research-projects/ongoing-projects/homer-from-history-to-memory-culture-narratives-of-the-european-council-summits/> (last accessed 5 October 2017).
  2. See, as recent contributions, J. WÜSTENBERG, *The Struggle for European Memory: New Contributions to an Emerging Field*, in: *Comparative European Politics*, 14(2016), pp.376–389; W. KAISER, R. McMAHON, *Narrating European Integration: Transnational Actors and Stories*, in: *National Identities*, 19(2017), pp.149–160, Q. CLOET, *Two Sides to Every Story(teller): Competition, Continuity and Change in Narratives of European Integration*, in: *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 25(2017), pp.291–306, and as an early intervention in this debate: Bo STRÅTH, *Methodological and Substantive Remarks on Myth, Memory and History in the Construction of a European Community* in: *German Law Journal*, 6(2005), pp.255–271.
  3. See as their websites: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/visiting/en/brussels/house-of-european-history>; <https://publications.europa.eu/en/web/general-publications/history> (both last accessed 5 October 2017).

1960s.<sup>4</sup> To do so, we will analyze the narratives of four key moments in the history of today's European Union as they have been produced, picked up and disseminated by the media in the period from 1960 to mid-2017. As will be explained in more detail below, the four selected events are the Schuman Declaration (1950), the Treaties of Rome (1957), The Hague summit (1969) and the Maastricht Treaty (1992). We define a narrative as an account of connecting events presented in a more or less cohesive way, with a specific plot.<sup>5</sup> The media – more precisely quality newspapers from a range of European countries – provide useful insights into the availability of public knowledge on the history of the European integration process and the narration and commemoration of the past.

Methodologically, we assess the media presence of the four above-mentioned junctures in integration history. Alternative events were considered, but quantitative research revealed that these attracted much less attention in the news over the various decades than the instances that we highlight in this article. Hence, the set of examples we put into the center of our analysis are the most likely cases to receive commemorative media treatment considering that, overall, press coverage of EU history has always remained small. Moreover, our four events fall into different genres and refer to diverse dimensions of European integration history. They thus help us to understand which parts of this longer process attract particular attention and for what reasons.

This approach to studying the media salience of EU history is innovative both at the levels of methodology and content, particularly due to the chronological length of our analysis. Our investigation therefore has an exploratory character, and will hopefully serve as inspiration for further research – a point to which we will return in this article's conclusion.

The first news event is the Schuman Declaration, which ultimately paved the way for the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). The speech by French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman on 9 May 1950 quickly acquired iconic meaning. Thanks to the declaration, 9 May today has an elevated commemorative status, as the EU's official "Europe Day". In the context of EU history, it is the best remembered public declaration. Other speeches, for instance Charles de Gaulle's press conference in which he vetoed British EC accession in 1963, Jacques Delors' 1985 address on the Commission's ideas for the future or Margaret Thatcher's 1988 Bruges speech, were referred to so rarely that they were not considered for this analysis.

4. A lot of the research on media salience focus on news events in the narrow sense, not on history as news; see, e.g., H.I. CHYI, M. McCOMBS, *Media Salience and the Process of Framing: Coverage of the Columbine School Shootings*, in: *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 81(2004), pp.22–35.

5. See, as central references for this approach, H. WHITE, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1973; P. RICOEUR, *Time and Narrative*, vol.1–3, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1984–1988; A.C. DANTO, *Narration and Knowledge*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1985 and, as a recent survey, A. RIGNEY, *History as Text: Narrative Theory and History*, in: N. PARTNER, S. FOOT (eds), *The SAGE Handbook of Historical Theory*, Sage, Los Angeles, 2013, pp.183–201.

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The second news event relates to the Treaties of Rome of 1957. By establishing Euratom and, more importantly, the European Economic Community (EEC), these treaties created crucial parts of the institutional, legal, political and economic basis for the next decades of European integration until the Treaty of Maastricht. Today's media reports often describe the Treaties of Rome as the foundational treaties and the genuine starting point of European union. This is already an interesting result, since most contemporaries did not attribute this event with fundamental significance.<sup>6</sup> Also, the Treaties of Rome did not create the first predecessor institutions of today's EU. Building on the Schuman Declaration, six Western European governments signed the Treaty of Paris on 18 April 1951, establishing the ECSC. The latter was soon overshadowed by the EEC, however, and we found little reference to the Paris Treaty in the sources. Rather than the ECSC, it is the Schuman Declaration that is chiefly associated with the early beginnings of the institutional history of the EU prior to 1957.

The third news event we examine is The Hague summit of 1-2 December 1969, which brought together the heads of state and government of the member states. Parts of the academic literature see it as a central turning point in the EU's history, overcoming the standstill and crises characteristic of the time.<sup>7</sup> Today, meetings of the EU's heads of states and governments – officially referred to as European Council meetings – attract a lot of media attention and public visibility, not just because of their political importance, but also because they lend themselves to the media's tendency to personalize and polarize politics.<sup>8</sup> Summits are also important since they represent a more intergovernmental alternative to the more supranational ideas associated with the Schuman Declaration or the Treaties of Rome. The Hague summit interests us for another reason, too: such meetings were not foreseen in the original treaties of Paris and Rome. They slowly evolved from the 1960s, were partly institutionalized in 1974 and further formalized with the Single European Act, the Maastricht Treaty and ultimately the Lisbon Treaty of 2007, which gave them their present

6. See, e.g., M. GILBERT, *The Treaty of Rome in Narratives of European Integration*, in: M. GEHLER (ed.), *From Common Market to European Union Building: 50 Years of the Rome Treaties 1957–2007*, Böhlau, Cologne, 2009, pp.721–730.

7. See, e.g., J. MITTAG, W. WESSELS, *Die Gipfelkonferenzen von Den Haag (1969) und Paris (1972): Meilensteine für Entwicklungstrends der Europäischen Union*, in: F. KNIPPING, M. SCHÖNWALD (eds), *Aufbruch zum Europa der zweiten Generation: Die europäische Einigung 1969–1984*, WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, Trier, 2004, pp.3–27; A. BITUMI, *Rethinking the Historiography of Transatlantic Relations in the Cold War Years: the US, Europe and the Process of European Integration*, in: M. VAUDAGNA (ed.), *Reinstating Europe in American History in a Global Context*, Otto, Turin, 2015, pp.71–95, here p.90; L. van MIDDELAAR, *The Passage to Europe: How a Continent Became a Union*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2013), pp.162–163; as examples of more cautious interpretations J. van der HARST, *The 1969 Hague Summit: A New Start for Europe?*, in: *Journal of European Integration History*, 2(2003), pp.5–9 and several other contributions to this special issue; D. DINAN, *Ever Closer Union: An Introduction to European Integration*, Palgrave, New York, 2005), pp.57–60; K.K. PATEL, *Europäisierung wider Willen. Die Bundesrepublik Deutschland in der Agrarintegration der EWG, 1955–1973*, Oldenbourg, Munich, 2009, pp.397–427.

8. See, e.g., E.P. BUCY, R.L. HOLBERT (eds), *Sourcebook for Political Communication Research: Methods, Measures, and Analytical Techniques*, Routledge, New York, 2011.

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form. Today, they are often seen as the key decision-making moments in the European Union.<sup>9</sup> Having said this, most of the summits from the pre-Maastricht period were hardly ever referred to in later years by the press.<sup>10</sup> This also holds true for the first two summits – held in Paris in February 1961 and in Bad Godesberg in July 1961 respectively – in the context of the so-called Fouchet Plan debates on a political union. This plan, conceived by French President Charles de Gaulle in favour of a more intergovernmental alternative to the EEC and its sister institutions, received little attention in the international press; less than The Hague summit. Having said this, there is an interesting ambivalence, since EU institutions today often do not ascribe the 1969 summit vital importance in the evolution of this institution.<sup>11</sup> It is this very ambiguity that interests us about The Hague summit.

Finally, we also scrutinize news reporting concerning the Maastricht Treaty of 1992. After the more technical Single European Act of 1986, Maastricht brought the first major revision of the founding treaties of Paris and Rome dating from the 1950s and it created the European Union. Its fundamental impact on the trajectory of European integration, through the creation of an Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and cooperation in the field of Justice and Home Affairs (JHA), was quickly acknowledged by contemporaries and confirmed by later many interpretations, and it is therefore an obvious choice for analysis.<sup>12</sup>

In this article, we are particularly interested to ask which dimension the media chose to foreground and how the chosen narrative can be explained. On the one hand, the written press can opt for an approach that pays special attention to the historical context, the key actors, their role and their positions. We call this the “commemorative” approach because the focus of the narrative is on the act of commemorating a particular event. Alternatively, journalists can decide to focus more on the impact of the event on the long-term structural development of the European integration pro-

9. See, e.g., W. WESSELS, *The European Council*, Palgrave, London, 2016; on the media coverage of The Hague summit, also see the important work of J.-H. MEYER, *The European Public Sphere: Media and Transnational Communication in European Integration 1969–1991*, Franz Steiner, Stuttgart, 2010.

10. See, as early overviews of these pre-Maastricht summits, J. WERTS, *The European Council*, North-Holland, Amsterdam, 1992; W. WESSELS, *Der Europäische Rat. Stabilisierung statt Integration? Geschichte, Entwicklung und Zukunft der EG-Gipfelkonferenzen*, Europa Union Verlag, Bonn, 1980.

11. See, particularly the movie by the European Council itself on its history: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/news/history-european-council-film/> (last accessed 5 October 2017), or, e.g., P. de BOISSIEU e.a., *National Leaders and the Making of Europe: Key Episodes in the Life of the European Council*, John Harper Publishing, London, 2015), both of which see 1974 as the European Council’s starting point.

12. See for instance M. GEARY, C. GERMOND, K.K. PATEL, *The Maastricht Treaty: Negotiations and Consequences in Historical Perspective*, in: *Journal of European Integration History*, 1(2013), pp.5–9; T. CHRISTIANSEN, S. DUKE (eds), *The Maastricht Treaty: Second thoughts after 20 years*, in: *Journal of European Integration Special Issue*, 37(2012); C. MAZZUCELLI, *The Treaty of Maastricht: Designing the European Union*, in: F. LAURSEN (ed.), *Designing the European Union. From Paris to Lisbon*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2012, pp.147–179.

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cess. In this case, the policy implications and long-standing effect are front and center. We refer to this as the “political” approach because the narrative concentrates on the broader political implications of the event for European integration. These two narrative options are not crass alternatives, but rather ideal types in the Weberian sense, and each of them can be subject to change.<sup>13</sup>

We examine whether the four critical junctures under study are associated more with the concrete historical context and relevant actors, or with the long-term political impact of the event. This helps us to understand if the media preferred one style of narration over another. We hypothesize that the reporting about The Hague summit and Schuman Declaration will follow the commemorative narrative. Such news events are quite in line with the rationale of news reporting, since they allow for the personalization and polarization of politics. Simultaneously, this approach tends to acknowledge the historical significance of an event, dealing with history in its own right, and for commemorative purposes.

When dealing with the contents of the treaties, we expect the media to resort to the political narrative, since these legal documents are more important in a political and long-term perspective, particularly in the EU context, in which Walter Hallstein famously defined the EEC as a “Rechtsgemeinschaft” (community of law) as early as the 1960s.<sup>14</sup> Referring to the treaty itself often entails highlighting the political implications and linking them to concerns at the time of reporting. The fact that all European treaties are rather technical documents, devoid of the drama of constitutions such as the French or the US-American, further suggests that references to the treaty will tend to emphasize the “political” over the “commemorative” approach. Having said this, we also analyze the key summits that are linked to the treaties (e.g. the signing of the Treaties of Rome on 25 March 1957). These allow for either form of reporting, since such final negotiations are sometimes associated with quite a bit of drama and can lend themselves both to personalization and to the linking of the event to legal and political long-term perspectives.

In this selection of “most likely cases”, we thus combine different kinds of news events to assess if some more than others lent themselves to narrative references and commemorative practices or to political approaches and, if so, for what reasons. We also check whether there is an evolution over time. In this context, the commemorative practices of EC/EU institutions, national players and other actors deserve parti-

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13. Our distinction is not to be confused with the one between “communicative” and “cultural” memory, well established in memory studies. In this distinction established by Aleida and Jan Assmann, both our forms would fall under “communicative memory” (not least because of the link to contemporaneity), even if we doubt that the events we focus on are deeply rooted in oral transmission. J. ASSMANN, *Communicative and Cultural Memory*, in: A. ERLI, A. NÜNNING (eds), *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, De Gruyter, Berlin, 2008, pp. 109–118; J. ASSMANN, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*, Beck, Munich, 1992.

14. Vgl. W. HALLSTEIN, *Der unvollendete Bundesstaat. Europäische Erfahrungen und Erkenntnisse*, Econ, Düsseldorf, 1969, p.33; on this issue, also see K. TUORI, *European Constitutionalism*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2015, pp.213–214.

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cular consideration, since they might have sparked media treatment of the organization's history.

The arguments presented here are based on research with newspaper articles published in four Western European countries. For the four news events, we analyzed articles from the *Le Monde*, *Le Figaro*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *NRC Handelsblad*, the *London Times*, and the *Guardian*. This selection is in line with the practice of several other comparative media studies on European integration, but we have added to the usual mix the Dutch *NRC Handelsblad* as a newspaper from a smaller member state.<sup>15</sup> All these broadsheets are part of the quality press and represent main currents in the political spectrum of France, (West) Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Written mainly for an elite audience, they influence public opinion and are closely observed by fellow journalists, influencing, in turn, their publications and the debate more generally. All these newspapers existed for the whole period under investigation, allowing us to assess continuities and change over time. Given that European integration was for a long time underrepresented in media coverage, these quality newspapers represent the most likely cases for coverage, just as the selected news events do at their level.<sup>16</sup>

In selecting our sources, we focus on the anniversaries (five, ten, fifteen, twenty, etc. years) after an event such as the Schuman Declaration or the signing of a treaty. Invocation at such moments indicates that an event has acquired salience in public narratives about the past. Admittedly, historical events are also referred to on other dates, besides such anniversaries, particularly when linked to newsworthy developments. To give a recent example: the 1975 EC membership referendum in the United Kingdom was frequently referred to during the 2016 Brexit debates. Moreover, the aforementioned Fouchet Plans were mentioned from time to time in later years, but hardly ever on the occasion of anniversaries.<sup>17</sup> To keep our sources on the various dates comparable, however, we do not consider such references that fall outside the rhythm of anniversaries – also because articles spurred by anniversaries' reveal more of an intrinsic commemorative intention than those triggered by present events.

Also at the methodological level, this article combines quantitative with qualitative forms of analysis. For an initial assessment of the significance of a news event

15. The *NRC Handelsblad* was established in 1970, in a fusion of the *Algemeen Handelsblad* and the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*. The two newspapers had already started cooperating since the early 1960s, and the number of articles from this early period is marginal in the overall set.

16. See, e.g., J. LODGE, K. SARIKAKIS (eds.), *Communication, Mediation and Culture in the Making of Europe*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2013.

17. See, e.g., A. FONTAINE, *West Germany Adrift: The temptation of neutrality*, in: *Guardian*, 30.01.1983; *Plea for German role in nuclear defence*, in: *Guardian*, 30.10.1983; R. BOYES, *The master builder of Europe*, in: *Times*, 19.07.2000; Dr. Joseph Luns, in: *Times*, 18.07.2002. In the French media see: A. FONTAINE, *Europe: signer n'est pas ratifier*, in: *Le Monde*, 10.11.2004 and *Le couple franco-allemand à l'épreuve du temps*, in: *Le Monde*, 10.11.2015. In Dutch media see: J. GERRITSEN, *Haagse atlantici hoeven niet bang te zijn voor het Franse risico*, in: *NRC Handelsblad*, 28.11.1991 and E.H. KOSSMANN, *Interbellum is voor zestienjarige prehistorie*, in: *NRC Handelsblad*, 20.05.1992. In the German media, see, e.g., *Eine Brückenklausel gegen den Stillstand*, in: *FAZ*, 02.07.2009; *Derselbe Film – mit anderem Ende?*, in: *FAZ*, 23.06.2016.

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during later anniversaries, we resorted to a quantitative evaluation based on the digital repositories Delpher, LexisNexis and ProQuest and the (partly) digitized archives of newspapers such as *Le Monde* and *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, as well as samples from those newspapers for which such repositories were not available. For the qualitative analysis, all relevant articles identified for the four news events in the full period under study were consulted.<sup>18</sup>

Our newspaper analysis covers the period from 1960, on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Schuman Declaration, to March/April 2017, when several events were held to celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Treaties of Rome. This span allows us to identify long-term trends as well as important changes that have occurred during the period under study.

The structure of this article reflects our analytical interests. It does not follow each of the four media events in turn, but opts for a more comprehensive approach. In the first section, we ask which of these events received most attention across our newspaper spectrum during the period under study. In this section, we examine whether articles opted more for a more “commemorative” or “political” approach. The second section provides initial answers as to why the media reported on these news events in different ways. It highlights the role of EU and national institutions in creating events that served commemorative purposes. The third section briefly assesses changes over time, and finally the conclusion summarizes our findings and describes several avenues for future research.

### Which History Is Commemorated?

As a first step, our empirical analysis explored the differences in coverage and narrative approach. An initial finding is that during the whole period under study, media coverage of all the seven newspapers consistently focused more on some events than on others. The *Times* is a good example: in all articles within our specific date ranges on the anniversaries, the Schuman Declaration was referred to seven times from 1965 to 2015, the Treaties of Rome were invoked 65 times between 1962 (five years after their conclusion) and 2017, and the Maastricht Treaty 27 times between 1997 and 2017. The frequency for summits was dramatically lower: in fact, the summit of The

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18. For each of the “anniversary dates”, we analyzed the publications from the ten-day-period around the date to be commemorated, e.g. for the Schuman Declaration of 9 May, the analysis covered the period from 5–15 May.

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Hague was mentioned only once,<sup>19</sup> and the Maastricht summit only fifteen times.<sup>20</sup> The respective figures for *Le Monde* are 35 for the Schuman Declaration, 146 for the Treaties of Rome, 44 for the Maastricht Treaty, eight for The Hague and five for the Maastricht summit. This imbalance is confirmed by a quantitative analysis in Lexis-Nexis, ProQuest and the digitalized archives of the other newspapers included in this study that yield similar results. Overall, the sources thus demonstrate that the media tend to focus more on Treaties with long-term and legally binding obligations than on one-time events such as a declaration or summit. The statistical analysis, revealing that The Hague summit and the Maastricht summit were referred to only occasionally in our set of sources, provides further evidence for this argument.

When it comes to the Treaties themselves, the Treaties of Rome are referred to many more times than the Treaty of Maastricht. Admittedly, the sheer quantitative difference is not surprising given the period under study, with the Maastricht Treaty being non-existent during the first three decades of the analysis. But also if one compares the number of references to the Treaties of Rome and the Maastricht Treaty for the period of 1997 to 2017, there are considerable differences. Adhering to the example of the *Times*, 36 of the 65 references to the Treaties of Rome fall into the years since 1997 – significantly more than for the Treaty of Maastricht during the same timespan.<sup>21</sup>

Beyond the purely quantitative dimension, there is also the qualitative question of the dominant narrative. As mentioned above, we are particularly interested whether, for each of the four critical junctures, the narrative is more commemorative in nature or more focused on the broader political implications of the event.

19. H. STEPHENSON, *Siren song that should be ignored*, in: *Times*, 04.12.1979.

20. H. YOUNG, *Inside John Major's tortured soul*, in: *Guardian*, 05.12.1996; M. WHITE, E. MACASKILL, *Major's week of living dangerously*, in: *Guardian*, 07.12.1996; *Blair's Maastricht*, in: *Times*, 14.12.2001; C. BREMNER, *Europeans get to grips with their euro coins*, in: *Times*, 15.12.2001; C. BREMNER, D. CHARTER, R. WATSON, *Cameron in crosshairs over future of Europe*, in: *Times*, 08.12.2011; *The future starts now, we cannot afford to fudge it*, in: *Times*, 09.12.2011; D. MARSH, *No endgame in sight*, in: *Guardian*, 09.12.2011; C. BREMNER, *Merkel calls shots as Germany sets out the terms for euro fiscal union*, in: *Times*, 09.12.2011; P. NAUGHTON, R. WATSON, *Britain is left alone in the new Europe*, in: *Times*, 09.12.2011; D. GOW, *The euro was conceived 20 years ago today, but now even Maastricht questions its survival*, in: *Guardian*, 09.12.2011; M. WHITE, *The European question: will it be splendid isolation or miserable?*, in: *Guardian*, 09.12.2011; *Britain and the battle over European Union*, in: *Guardian*, 10.12.2011; *Cameron and Europe: The English Outpatient*, in: *Guardian*, 10.12.2011; D. SMITH, *Euro rescue remains on crumbling foundations*, in: *Times*, 11.12.2011; D. FINKELSTEIN, *We've been isolated for 20 years. Get used to it*, in: *Times*, 14.12.2011.

21. This comparison focuses on references to the Treaties, not the respective summits.

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The picture for the Treaties of Rome is mixed. Some of the articles referring to the events of 1957 have a “commemorative” dimension or tone.<sup>22</sup> They evoke the historical context and intersperse their accounts with colourful details, for instance by describing the signing ceremony at the Palazzo dei Conservatori on the Capitoline Hill in Rome or by characterizing the *dramatis personae* involved at the time.<sup>23</sup> For the purpose of our article, these commemorative references are of particular interest: here, a historical event is evoked in its own right, underlining the role and importance of the EU's past and the need to keep the memory of earlier periods alive.

In 1997, for instance, *Le Monde* explained at great length why Konrad Adenauer was the only head of government undersigning the treaty, while all other nations merely sent their Ministers of Foreign affairs. The French newspaper referred to the German Chancellor's memoirs in which he explained that

“c'est seulement en se mettant ensemble dans un espace économique commun que les pays d'Europe peuvent à long terme devenir et rester compétitifs”.<sup>24</sup>

Occasionally, even the inclement weather conditions of 25 March 1957 are mentioned, contrasting grey skies and rain with political optimism and farsightedness. In 1977, for instance, the *Times* recalled that

“in the afternoon of that day, 20 years ago, a fresh westerly wind was pushing large grey clouds across the Roman sky. There were frequent showers, but the air scented of spring”.<sup>25</sup>

In 2007, *Le Monde* published an article by Maurice Faure (1922–2014), the former French Foreign Minister who had signed the Treaties of Rome in 1957. Faure first described the differences of the political circumstances in Europe separating the 2000s from the 1950s. He then evoked the negotiating model of the time, which entailed frequent meetings of the representatives from each member state in the Château de Val-Duchesse near Brussels, “qui pourrait servir de modèle pour relancer le projet européen”.<sup>26</sup>

22. See, e.g., *Kiesinger lobt die EWG*, in: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 28.03.1967; *Chauvinism in an Uncommon Market*, in: *Guardian*, 25.03.1977; *How Churchill's Dream of Europe Foundered*, in: *Times*, 25.03.1982; *We, the Europeans*, in: *Times*, 24.03.1987; H.-J. FISCHER, *94 Unterschriften an historischem Ort*, in: *FAZ*, 25.03.1997; H. de BRESSON, *Les 50 ans du traité de Rome; Mariage à l'européenne*, in: *Le Monde*, 24.03.2007; R. HATTERSLEY, *Euro Visionaries*, in: *Guardian*, 25.03.1997; *Le traité de Rome, bible de l'Union européenne*, in: *Le Figaro*, 23.03.2007.

23. *Il y a trente ans, les traités de Rome au Capitole, dans la salle des Horaces et des Curiaces...*, in: *Le Monde*, 22.03.1987; P. LEMAITRE, *Les quinze ont célébré le traité de Rome au Capitole*, in: *Le Monde*, 27.03.1997; *Jeden Artikel habe ich handschriftlich selbst verfasst*, in: *FAZ*, 23.03.2007; *On this day*, in: *Times*, 26.03.2007; A.-M. ROMERO, *L'Europe de la culture célébrée au Parthénon*, in: *Le Figaro*, 29.03.2007; D. BOFFEY, *EU leaders mark 60th anniversary with Rome declaration*, in: *Guardian*, 25.03.2017.

24. D. VERNET, *Ainsi naquit la Communauté européenne*, in: *Le Monde*, 24.03.1997.

25. *Twenty Years ago, a Front Seat at the Great Design that Became the Treaty of Rome*, in: *Times*, 25.03.1977.

26. M. FAURE, *Retrouver l'esprit de Val Duchesse*, in: *Le Monde*, 23.03.2007.

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However, this “commemorative” approach to the Treaties of Rome should not be confused with an uncritical perspective. Very often, texts look backward to assess what the EU has achieved in the meantime, as well as to discuss failed promises and other problems. On 24 March 1987, a columnist for the *Times* begun his article by stating:

“There is a time and place this week for re-affirming the pieties of the founding fathers, the place being Rome and the time – Wednesday’s thirtieth anniversary of the signing of the treaty. There is a place, too, for sober reflection on the setbacks, the conflicts of national interest, the periods of stagnation, the failures of political will”.<sup>27</sup>

One day later, the Dutch *NRC Handelsblad* published the headline: “Geen reden voor een Europese feestdag” (There is no reason for a European festive day).<sup>28</sup> There are articles written in a similar way for almost every anniversary.<sup>29</sup>

This does not mean that all articles on the Treaties of Rome foreground such a “commemorative” dimension. Many texts refer to the details of 1957 only briefly and then dedicate significant space to the developments since, or to the political situation in their own day. As explained previously, we call this the “political” approach, in which the present situation tends to receive more attention than in the “commemorative”, and where the reference to past events often only serves as a vehicle to discuss ongoing processes.<sup>30</sup> This is especially the case for articles written by prominent politicians; for instance when German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel published an essay in *Le Monde* in 1997,<sup>31</sup> or Cypriot President Tassos Papadopoulos in the *FAZ* ten years later,<sup>32</sup> but also, for instance, for an article by British journalist Mark Rice-Oxley from the *Guardian*, published simultaneously also in the *Le Monde*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *El País*, *La Stampa* and *Gazeta Wyborcza* in March 2017.<sup>33</sup>

27. *We, the Europeans*, in: *Times*, 24.03.1987.

28. *Geen reden voor een Europese feestdag*, in: *NRC Handelsblad*, 25.03.1987.

29. See, e.g., *Kontroversen überschatten EG-Jubiläum*, in: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 26/27.03.1977; W. REES-MOOG, *Europe in Middle Age*, in: *Times*, 27.03.1997; *50 Jahre Subventionen*, in: *FAZ*, 23.03.2007.

30. See, e.g., A. GROSSER, *L'Europe en question*, in: *Le Monde*, 29.03.1967; *Le miracle économique de la CEE n'était que le prélude à la crise*, in: *Le Monde*, 29.03.1977; I. MURRAY, *EEC Silver Jubilee: Why the Champagne is Flat*, in: *Times*, 22.03.1982; *Frankrijk: WEU in EU laten integreren*, in: *NRC Handelsblad*, 25.03.1997; *Echte economische integratie nog ver weg*, in: *NRC Handelsblad*, 20.03.2007; *Europe: 'Ce n'est pas le moment de se désunir'*, in: *Le Monde*, 24.03.2017; *60 jaar verdrag van Rome*, in: *NRC Handelsblad*, 25.03.2017; J.-J. MÉVEL, *Soixante ans après la signature du traité de Rome, les Européens se cherchent un nouveau destin*, in: *Le Figaro*, 25.03.2017.

31. K. KINKEL, *L'Europe à mi-chemin*, in: *Le Monde*, 25.3.1997; or, as a similar example, B. BOLLAERT, C. LAMBROSCHINI, *Quarantième anniversaire du traité de Rome* (Interview with Hervé de Charette), in: *Le Figaro*, 25.03.1997.

32. T. PAPADOPOULOS, *Am Scheideweg*, in: *FAZ*, 23.03.2007.

33. M. RICE-OXLEY, *The EU is 60 – and it helped my generation fall in love with Europe*, in: *Guardian*, 23.03.2017; see, e.g., also M. RICE-OXLEY, *Traité de Rome: Bon anniversaire, l'UE! Vraiment désolé de ne pas être de la fête*, in: *Le Monde*, 25.03.2017.

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In the texts on the Maastricht Treaty, the “commemorative” dimension plays a much smaller role. Instead, articles have a more “political” spin, in contrast to the more celebratory approach of texts on the Treaties of Rome. Articles on the Maastricht Treaty tend to refer to the criteria of the Economic and Monetary Union and the readiness or capability of member states to adhere to them.<sup>34</sup> On 4 February 1997, the *Guardian* reported that

“Italy’s plan to be in the first wave of EMU [was] still opposed by influential German bankers and politicians doubting that the country [could] prove its fiscal probity”.<sup>35</sup>

In 2012, the *FAZ* discussed the fiscal policies in the EU and quoted Green politician Jürgen Trittin, according to whom Chancellor Merkel was finally committed to “giving the Treaty of Maastricht finally its teeth” by agreeing to a fiscal pact.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, many articles discussed the Treaty’s strengths and weaknesses, underscoring its political implications for the time of reporting.<sup>37</sup>

Concurrently, the actual event of the Treaty’s signature receives little attention in the case of Maastricht. “Maastricht” mainly means a legal text, not a historical incidence. In that sense, it remained a non-place, with little description of historical actors, their motives and historical contexts.<sup>38</sup> The only counter-tendency to these findings is noticeable in 2017, on the occasion on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the treaty, when some articles included a slightly more commemorative tone. It is still too early to judge if this is the beginning of a new trend or an exception.<sup>39</sup>

34. See, e.g., J. BUSH, *Confidence Can't Hide Cracks in Santer's Window on the World*, in: *Times*, 03.02.1997; *Torries Fail to Satisfy Need for Reform*, in: *Times*, 03.02.1997; C. BREMNER, *Brussels Finance Chief Launches Charm Offensive against Sceptics*, in: *Times*, 05.02.1997; *Irreversible Option*, in: *Times*, 06.02.1997; M. MILNER, I. TRAYNOR, *EU Chief heralds Fudge-Free Europe*, in: *Guardian*, 07.02.1997; R. BOYES, *German Nerves Show in Prodi Euro Talks*, in: *Times*, 08.02.1997; M. KETTLE, *Should Britain Cross the Great Divide to Europe?*, in: *Guardian*, 10.02.1997; *Stark: Konzept für die Währungsunion stimmt*, in: *FAZ*, 20.02.1997; J. JAHN, *Vom Binnenmarkt zum Leviathan*, in: *FAZ*, 19.02.2002.
35. J. PALMER, *Statisticians Buy Italy's Plans for joining Euro*, in: *Guardian*, 04.02.1997.
36. *Fiskalpakt gebilligt – Ausweitung des Euro-Krisenfonds erwartet*, in: *FAZ*, 01.02.2012.
37. See, e.g., C. BREMNER, *First draft for revised EU treaty leaves big issues on back burner*, in: *Times*, 05.12.1996; H. SMITH, *Tensions rise on Greek roads to nowhere*, in: *Guardian*, 09.12.1996; D. SMITH, *Demanding timetable may force EMU delay*, in: *Times*, 02.02.1997; J. BUSH, *Confidence can't hide cracks in Santer's window on the world*, in: *Times*, 03.02.1997; S. MILNE, *Chapter and worse: Is it a threat to British Jobs?*, in: *Guardian*, 04.02.1997; *The French Front*, in: *Times*, 11.02.1997; A. PETTIFOR, *Standard & Poor's is right, 'austerity' has no economic clothes*, in: *Guardian*, 06.12.2011; B. JENKIN, *Cameron's endgame: If the prime minister doesn't take this chance to get a new deal with the EU when will he?*, in: *Guardian*, 08.12.2011; D. WIGHTON, *A brave move, Mr. Cameron, but it backfired*, in: *Times*, 12.12.2011; A. MENON, *Unhappy Anniversary: Maastricht 25 Years On*, in: *Times*, 07.02.2017.
38. *Dangers of Disdain*, in: *Times*, 13.12.1996; J. MONKS, *Why we need Europe*, in: *Guardian*, 13.12.1996.
39. See, e.g., *Der Euro und seine Kritiker*, in: *FAZ*, 06.02.2017; A. MENON, *Unhappy Anniversary: Maastricht 25 years on*, in: *Times*, 07.02.2017; *25 ans du traité de Maastricht*, in: *Le Monde*, 08.02.2017; *Il y a vingt-cinq ans, Maastricht!*, in: *Le Figaro*, 09.02.2017.

The 1950 Schuman Declaration is second only to the Treaties of Rome in its being viewed in commemorative terms.<sup>40</sup> In our sample, seven articles refer to it in the *Times*, 35 in *Le Monde* and five in *NRC Handelsblad*. Already in 1960, *Le Monde* referred to it as “la déclaration ‘révolutionnaire’”;<sup>41</sup> five years later, the *Times* reported about an event of “the leaders of Europe” in West Berlin commemorating the Declaration. The London-based newspaper did not forget to mention that “Britain was absent from this historic occasion” – the country only joined the EC in 1973.<sup>42</sup> It prominently featured Jean Monnet, whose name often crops up in the context of the Schuman Declaration, though less often than Schuman’s. Few articles refer to Monnet as the true author of the Declaration; sometimes, both men are mentioned in the same sentence as founding fathers of today’s EU, without going into much detail.<sup>43</sup> As is the case for the Treaties of Rome, the Schuman Declaration is mainly written about with a “commemorative” approach, though quantitatively and qualitatively, it is not as prominent as references to 1957.

The Hague summit attracted by far the least media attention, and here the narrative of the press was mainly “political”. In 1979, for instance, a *Times* article on Britain and the European Monetary System mentioned The Hague summit in passing.<sup>44</sup> That the British press did not refer to The Hague more frequently is interesting, since the 1969 summit played an important role in clearing the path to the United Kingdom’s EC accession some three years later. In 1969, British media had paid close attention to the event, so this void during later years cannot be explained by general ignorance.<sup>45</sup> Equally interesting is the news reporting in the Netherlands. It was here that the summit had taken place, and the significance given to it at the national level back in 1969 is best epitomized by the fact that Queen Juliana had invited participants for a dinner. Still, the *NRC Handelsblad* made no reference to The Hague summit in later

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40. See, e.g., *Zehn Jahre Montanunion*, in: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 10.05.1960; *Drive for European Equal Partnership with US*, in: *Times*, 10.05.1965; E.G. LACHMAN, *Giscard stopt met herdenking van bevrijding*, in: *NRC Handelsblad*, 09.05.1975; M. BINYON, *EC Moves to Cement East European Milks*, in: *Times*, 09.05.1990; H. TIMMERMAN, *Genau das ist es. Ein Sprung ins Unbekannte*, in: *FAZ*, 09.05.2000; I. BLACK, *Europe Day, Bruno Beats Brussels to the Punch*, in: *Guardian*, 10.05.2000; M. de WAARD, *Fischer wil een regering voor Europa*, in: *NRC Handelsblad*, 12.05.2000; H. de BRESSON, R. RIVAIS, *Cinquantenaire de la déclaration fondatrice de Robert Schuman*, in: *Le Monde*, 10.05.2000; H. de BRESSON, *8 Mai 1945 – 9 Mai 1950: deux journées décisives*, in: *Le Monde*, 10.09.2005; H.-G. PÖTTERING, *Erst einmal Kohle und Stahl*, in: *FAZ*, 07.05.2010; P. ROUSSELIN, *L’anniversaire de la déclaration Schuman*, in: *Le Figaro*, 08.05.2010.
41. *L’anniversaire est commémoré à Luxembourg*, in: *Le Monde*, 09.05.1960.
42. *Drive for European ‘Equal Partnership with US’*, in: *Times*, 09.05.1965.
43. R. RIGHTER, *Now You’re Grown up, Make Friends with America*, in: *Times*, 21.03.2007; *Coal and Steel in Celebratory Mood at EU Birthday Party*, in: *Guardian*, 21.03.2007; H.-G. PÖTTERING, *Erst einmal Kohle und Stahl*, in: *FAZ*, 7.5.2010. See, as a critical perspective on this idea of Europe’s “founding fathers”, which has had rather little impact on media coverage: A.S. MILWARD, *The European Rescue of the Nation-State*, 2nd ed., Routledge, London, 2000, pp.318–344.
44. H. STEPHENSON, *Siren song that should be ignored*, in: *Times*, 04.12.1979; see also as a reference in passing: —and a better one from Paris, in: *Guardian*, 09.12.1974.
45. J.-H. MEYER, *The European Public Sphere...*, op.cit.

years. The few newspaper articles that we were able to find in our overall set referred to the summit in a highly political way, with almost no commemorative dimension.

Summarising, it is evident from the above analysis that treatment received by the written press differs considerably from case to case. The legally binding Treaties of Rome and the Treaty of Maastricht have clearly received more attention than one-time events such as the Schuman Declaration, The Hague summit or the summits linked to the Rome and Maastricht Treaties. Furthermore, the predominant narrative differs for the various news events. While the Treaties of Rome show a mixed picture, the reporting on the Maastricht Treaties and The Hague summit has a political tone. The narrative on the Schuman Declaration on the other hand is mainly commemorative.

### Triggers and Commemorative Footsteps

On the basis of our content-based analysis, it is impossible to fully ascertain why journalists chose to report about events in the manner they did. Still, there are some indications, particularly relevant for the Treaties of Rome. Since the 1960s, it has been commemorated as a kind of birthdate of the integration process; with the very term “birthday” – and its linguistic equivalents – being mentioned prominently.<sup>46</sup> This built on the fact that already during the signing ceremony back in 1957, all participants had been convinced that they were opening a new page in history; that their agreement deserved future commemoration. For example, in his speech on the occasion of signing the Treaty, Belgian Foreign Minister Paul-Henri Spaak emphasized that if the project they had commenced on that day was successful, 25 March 1957 “sera une des plus grandes dates de l’histoire de l’Europe”.<sup>47</sup> In that sense, a general commemorative framework and narrative mold was created early on – even if, beyond the elite circles of those involved, most Europeans did not pay a lot of

46. See, e.g., P. DROUIN, *Les Six célèbrent le deuxième anniversaire de la signature des traités de Rome*, in: *Le Monde*, 25.03.1967; W. VERWEIJ, *Jarige Europese Gemeenschap is ernstig ziek*, in: *NRC Handelsblad*, 25.03.1982; J. TODD, *Bickering at the top mars EU's birthday party*, in: *Times*, 22.03.1987; *Le trentième anniversaire de la CEE. Un marché peu commun*, in: *Le Monde*, 25.03.1987; K.M. SCHREINER, *Bij de dertigste verjaardag van de 'Verdragen van Rome', geen reden voor een Europese feestdag*, in: *NRC Handelsblad*, 25.03.1987; B. BOLLAERT, C. LAMBROSCHINI, *Quarantième anniversaire du traité de Rome*, in: *Le Figaro*, 25.03.1997; C. BREMNER, *Rome salutes 40 years of 'ever closer union'*, in: *Times*, 25.03.1997; D. CHARTER, *EU Gets Birthday Card only with Three Signatures*, in: *Times*, 21.03.2007; *Europa und das verjüngte Berlin*, in: *FAZ*, 22.03.2007; T. KINGTON, *Poles threaten to spoil EU's birthday party*, in: *Times*, 24.03.2017; *As they celebrate its 60th birthday, the EU leaders must urgently address how to overhaul outdated and failing institutions*, in: *Times*, 25.03.2017; *60 jaar verdrag van Rome*, in: *NRC Handelsblad*, 25.03.2017; H. HÜTT, *Europa als Sündenbock?*, in: *FAZ*, 28.03.2017.

47. Spaak's speech online: [https://www.cvce.eu/obj/discours\\_de\\_paul\\_henri\\_spaak\\_a\\_l\\_occasion\\_de\\_la\\_signature\\_des\\_traites\\_de\\_rome\\_rome\\_25\\_mars\\_1957-fr-0d9aa0d0-ac45-43afd0-6ab08ddd3590.html](https://www.cvce.eu/obj/discours_de_paul_henri_spaak_a_l_occasion_de_la_signature_des_traites_de_rome_rome_25_mars_1957-fr-0d9aa0d0-ac45-43afd0-6ab08ddd3590.html) (last accessed 5 October 2017).

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attention to the event at the time. In the media, however, this framework soon became dominant. The exception that proves the rule is an article from the *Guardian* in 2007, which attempted to correct a common misperception:

“The EU celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> birthday this weekend [...]. But the union is really 55 years old: five years before the Treaty of Rome, the European Coal and Steel Community (EC-SC), the brainchild of Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman, entered into force in July 1952 and lasted for 50 years”.<sup>48</sup>

This article also gives a good indication of what triggered this kind of reporting. The EC/EU itself held top-level meetings on many anniversaries and thus created its own commemorative tradition. Official summits were frequently organized in such a way that they coincided with commemorative dates, and they often ended with declarations about further steps of integration. In 2007, for instance, the Presidents of the European Parliament, the President of the Council and the President of the Commission signed the “Berlin Declaration”, as a brainchild of the German Council presidency during the year’s first half. Intended to help overcome the crisis after the failure of the Constitutional Treaty in the French and Dutch referendums in 2005, it explicitly chose the date of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Treaties of Rome as an occasion to attempt to give the EU new momentum.<sup>49</sup> Here, it was a member state government and ultimately all EU institutions together that strategically used the anniversary for political purposes – and thus also reinforced the commemorative visibility and salience of the 1957 reference. On this special occasion, EU institutions also invited the general public to participate in the event, and the city of Rome expected thousands of demonstrators – both supporting and opposing the EU.<sup>50</sup> This was the first time that the media presented the public’s involvement in the commemorative activities, further underscoring the commemorative approach and adding elements of festivalization and commercialization to the ways the past was referred to. In 2017, all EU member states but the United Kingdom stressed their commitment to integration in light of the Brexit negotiations, and tens of thousands demonstrated on the streets of Europe – both for and against the EU.<sup>51</sup>

48. *Coal and Steel in Celebratory Mood at EU Birthday Party*, in: *Guardian*, 21.03.2007.

49. On the Berlin Declaration see, e.g., S. BULMER, *Germany: From Launching the Constitutional debate to Salvaging a Treaty*, in: M. CARBONE (ed.), *National Politics and European Integration: From the Constitution to the Lisbon Treaty*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, 2010, pp.51–70; A. MAURER, *The German Council Presidency: Managing Conflicting Expectations*, in: *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 46(2008), pp.51–59.

50. H. de BRESSON, C. CALLA, *Berlin, Rome et Bruxelles en fête*, in: *Le Monde*, 27.03.2007; also see the long list of articles in the *FAZ* on 23.03.2007, e.g. J.M. BARROSO, *Die Mitgliedstaaten müssen der Versuchung des ‘Brussels bashing’ widerstehen* and J. LEITHÄUSER, *Dramatische Diskretion: Wie die ‘Berliner Erklärung’ entstand*, in: *FAZ*, 23.03.2007.

51. B. KÖHLER, *Zu unserem Unglück vereint?*, in: *FAZ*, 23.03.2017; T. KINGTON, *Poles threaten to spoil EU’s birthday party*, in: *Times*, 24.03.2017; D. BOFFEY, *EU leaders mark 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary with Rome Declaration*, in: *Guardian*, 25.03.2017; see, e.g. also, with reference to the Commission’s White Paper (released 01.03.2017), *‘Il faut rompre, en partie, avec l’Europe attrape-tout, qui s’occupe de tout’*, in: *Le Monde*, 25.03.2017; *‘Es wird auch einen 100. Geburtstag der EU geben’*, in: *FAZ*, 25.03.2017; *‘Ich liebe dich, Europa’*, in: *FAZ*, 25.03.2017.

During earlier periods, the European Commission often played an important role in organizing commemorative events, frequently in conjunction with the heads of state and government and, since its establishment in the 1970s, the European Council. In 1967, for instance, the Italian Foreign Minister Amintore Fanfani invited the governments of the other five member states to Rome to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the Treaties in March.<sup>52</sup> The following month, EEC Commission President Hallstein explicitly applauded the Brussels press corps for the extensive coverage of the anniversary.<sup>53</sup> In general, it was the EC or EU itself that regularly created newsworthy events on the occasion of the Treaties of Rome, which then provoked media interest, and closely scrutinized their media impact. Without these high-level political gatherings on such anniversary dates, reporting would probably have been substantially lower. The immediate salience of the event for contemporaries also explains why most articles are not exclusively “commemorative” in tone, but also incorporate “political” considerations.<sup>54</sup>

For the Schuman Declaration, too, official commemoration by EC/EU institutions plays a prominent role. Their attempts to institutionalize 9 May as part of collective remembrance started early: in 1962, that day became an official holiday for the officials working in the EC institutions, and in 1975, on the occasion of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Schuman Declaration, French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing proposed to the other members of the European Council to create a Europe day – an idea that did not take off at the time. A decade later, building on the work of the so-called Adonnino committee, the Milan summit of 28–29 June 1985 institutionalized 9 May as “Europe Day” (Dag van Europa, Europatag and Journée de l'Europe in the languages of the sources consulted here), though it did not become an official holiday in the various member states. The Constitutional Treaty sought to give it further visibility. Following the failure of Europe Day in 2005, 16 member states adopted a declaration in the context of the Lisbon Treaty which listed 9 May, together with the EU flag, the anthem based on the “Ode to Joy”, the motto “United in diversity” and

52. For the planning of the meeting see, e.g., *Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, vol. 1967, Oldenbourg, Munich, 1998, Document 8: Conversation Brandt-Fanfani, 05.01.1967; on the historical context, see N.P. LUDLOW, *The European Community and the Crises of the 1960s: Negotiating the Gaullist Challenge*, Routledge, London, 2006, pp. 130–133; as an article from 1967, see Hallstein: *Es gibt keine Alternative*, in: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 25/26/27.03.1967.

53. M. HERZER, *The Rise of Euro-journalism: The Media and the European Communities, 1950s–1970s*, unpubl. PhD thesis, European University Institute, 2017, p. 158.

54. See, e.g., “Bundestag bekennt sich zum Ausbau Europas”, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 25.3.1977; “Frankreich drängt die europamüden Deutschen”, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 25.3.1987; Roger Boyes, “Anniversary of Founding of the EEC”, in: *Times*, 26.3.1987; Jonathan Todd, “Bickering at the Top Mars EEC's Birthday Party”, *Sunday Times*, 22.3.1987; Roger Boyes, “Captain Kohl Scores own Goal by Putting South's Players in EMU Reserves”, in: *Times*, 24.3.1997; William Rees-Moog, “Europe in Middle Age”, in: *Times*, 27.3.1997; *Wie die Bundesrepublik eingebunden wurde*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 25.3.1997; David Charter, “EU Gets Birthday Card with Only Three Signatures”, in: *Times*, 21.3.2007; Richard Owen, “Europeans Make an Exhibition of Themselves”, in: *Times*, 22.3.2007; Angela Merkel, “Ein Erfolg für uns alle”, in: *FAZ*, 23.3.2007; David Charter, “Leaders Agree on a Date to Raise Treaty from the Dead”, in: *Times*, 26.3.2007.

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the Euro as currency. Together, they would “continue as symbols to express the sense of community of the people in the European Union and their allegiance to it”.<sup>55</sup>

Its official status and the fact that it has been celebrated every year since the 1980s, invoking an air of timelessness and significance through repetition, have given Europe Day media salience, but have also made it a routine affair in comparison to the more extravagant “1957 events”.<sup>56</sup> There are exceptions, of course, when 1950 was commemorated with high-level events, too. In 1985, on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, US President Ronald Reagan was invited to give a speech in the European Parliament on 9 May, triggering broad media coverage, for instance in the *NRC Handelsblad* and *Le Monde*.<sup>57</sup> Building on the results of the Milan summit, a popular dimension was introduced the next year, with events such as a big concert in Brussels hoping to reach out to European citizens. Still, Europe Day has largely remained an elite event, and it is not strongly felt by Europeans.<sup>58</sup> So, in sum, “1950 events” attract less coverage than commemoration of the Treaties of Rome, even if “1950 events” also often come with direct political salience.

The Treaty of Maastricht does not have an “official” commemoration date and, concomitantly, it receives comparably few mentions in the media. Moreover, there is a confusion as to when to “celebrate” Maastricht. Some articles refer to the summit on 9-10 December 1991 which saw some of the decisive negotiations; others to 7 February 1992, when the Treaty was signed; others to 1 November 1993, when it

55. *Official Journal of the EU*, C 306/267, 17.12.2007; on the history of Europe Day, see C.C. GIALDINO, *I Simboli dell'Unione europea. Bandiera – Inno – Motto – Moneta – Giornata*, Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, Rome, 2005; F. LARAT, *Present-ing the Past: Political Narratives on European History and the Justification of EU Integration*, in: *German Law Journal*, 6(2005), pp.273–290; more fundamentally, also see C. BOTTICI, *European Identity and the Politics of Remembrance*, in: K. TILMANS, F. van VREE, J. WINTER (eds), *Performing the Past: Memory, History, and the Identity of Modern Europe*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, 2010, pp. 335–359.
56. See, for instance, *Ce 9 Mai 1950...*, in: *Le Monde*, 09.05.1960; *Drive for European 'Equal Partnership' with US*, in: *Times*, 10.05.1965; *Dans sa déclaration commune, le comité d'action pour les États-Unis d'Europe réclame l'application de la méthode communautaire à la création de l'Europe politique*, in: *Le Monde*, 11.05.1965; *Dans l'histoire de la CEEA, du rose et du gris*, in: *Le Monde*, 09.05.1970; R.F. LEJEUNE, *Pourquoi l'Europe?*, in: *Le Monde*, 10.05.1975; E.G. LACHMAN, *Giscard stopt met herdenking van bevrijding*, in: *NRC Handelsblad*, 09.05.1975; C. SETON, *Harmony 'still too far off'*, in: *Times*, 15.05.1975; I. MURRAY, *Uncertain day for European unity*, in: *Times*, 10.05.1980; *Europadag bijna vergeten*, in: *NRC Handelsblad*, 09.05.1995; I. BLACK, *Europe Day Bruno beats Brussels to the punch*, in: *Guardian*, 10.05.2000; *Viering 'Europa' met treinreis*, in: *NRC Handelsblad*, 09.05.2000; H.-G. PÖTTERING, *Erst einmal Kohle und Stahl*, in: *FAZ*, 07.05.2010; A. PABST, *Debt Crisis: The Eurozone will collapse without reform*, in: *Guardian*, 08.05.2010; R. WATSON, *Darling's last act?*, in: *Times*, 10.05.2010.
57. W. VERWEY, *Reagan in Straatsburg leraar voor lastige klas*, in: *NRC Handelsblad*, 09.05.1985; see also: *The old man doesn't understand. US President Reagan's address to the European Parliament*, in: *Guardian*, 09.05.1985; *Le président Reagan exalte l'avènement d'une 'Europe européenne'*, in: *Le Monde*, 09.05.1985; *Reagan Hopes to See Unified Europe*, in: *Times*, 09.05.1985.
58. C.C. GIALDINO, *I Simboli dell'Unione europea*, op.cit., pp.177-185.

entered into force.<sup>59</sup> For the Treaties of Rome, there is no such symbolic confusion, even if it also only entered into force months after it had been signed (1 January 1958). This ambivalence with regard to Maastricht is all the more interesting since the European Council regularly holds summit meetings in mid-December, often coinciding with the anniversary of the 1991 Maastricht summit and thus prompting commemorative events. But even in 2011, when European leaders gathered for a summit 20 years after Maastricht to revamp the Lisbon Treaty in light of the economic crisis, the original treaty was barely mentioned.<sup>60</sup> All in all, there were few efforts by the EU institutions to commemorate the Treaties of Maastricht. The initiative has come primarily from the municipality of Maastricht and the Dutch Province of Limburg. At the occasion of the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary, it invited the surviving key political leaders for a celebratory event in the municipality town hall and the province house.<sup>61</sup> The 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary was commemorated with some of today's European leaders in the city of Maastricht in February 2017, showing an interesting diversification of actors pushing for commemorative events, which now also included a municipality, the Province of Limburg and the local university. International media coverage was noticeable, but not overwhelming, and it remains to be seen if "Maastricht" will play a larger commemorative role in the future.<sup>62</sup>

The Hague summit, finally, has no such commemorative triggers through political events, even though the contrary would seem quite likely: as already mentioned, the

59. On this symbolic confusion see, e.g., H. YOUNG, *Inside John Major's tortured soul*, in: *Guardian*, 05.12.1996; M. PRESTON, *Chancellor in hock*, in: *Times*, 10.12.1996; M. SCHINKEL, 'Euro symboliseert de openheid van de Europese integratie', in: *NRC Handelsblad*, 14.12.1996; Kohl: *Rom beim Euro nicht in der zweiten Reihe*, in: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 08/09.02.1997; H. KOHL, *L'euro, clé de la maison commune*, in: *Le Monde*, 14.12.2001; C. PRUDHOMME, P. RICARD, *Des deux côtés de l'Atlantique, l'humeur est à l'attentisme monétaire*, in: *Le Monde*, 07.02.2002; B. CAVALIER, *L'euro: mourir à 20 ans ...ou pas?*, in: *Le Figaro*, 08.12.2011; P. RICARD, *M. Junker veut 'un changement de traité rapide'*, in: *Le Monde*, 09.12.2011; D. MARSH, *The eurozone crisis endgame is still some way off*, in: *Guardian*, 08.12.2011; J.-J. MÉVEL, *La zone euro renforce sa discipline budgétaire*, in: *Le Figaro*, 10.12.2011; G. THOMAS, *Isoliert*, in: *FAZ*, 10.12.2011; M. WHITE, *Divorce was on the cards for Tories and Europe*, in: *Guardian*, 10.12.2011; P. van der STEEN, *Maastricht houdt haar blik op Europa gericht*, in: *NRC Handelsblad*, 07.02.2012; T. GARTON ASH, *Merkel needs all the help she can get: Few had anticipated the leadership dilemmas of a European Germany in a German Europe*, in: *Guardian*, 09.02.2012; I. TRAYNOR, *British students going Dutch to avoid debt*, in: *Guardian*, 10.02.2012; *Moedig en zinvol puntenplan*, in: *NRC Handelsblad*, 14.12.2012; M. KRANENBURG, *Hoe vier je de verjaardag van een zieke EU?*, in: *NRC Handelsblad*, 10.12.2016; *Hans van den Broek 80*, in: *FAZ*, 10.12.2016; J. EIJSSVOOGEL, *Pas op mijn zeventigste toonde ik trots op Duitsland*, in: *NRC Handelsblad*, 04.02.2017; J.-P. STROOBANTS, *Maastricht pour mémoire*, in: *Le Monde*, 04.02.2017; *'Europa wird zur Transferunion'*, in: *FAZ*, 07.02.2017.
60. See, e.g., B. CAVALIER, *L'euro: mourir à 20 ans ...ou pas?*, in: *Le Figaro*, 08.12.2011; N. WATT, I. TRAYNOR, *Merkel accuses PM of negotiating in bad faith*, in: *Guardian*, 10.12.2011; A. LEP-ARMENTIER, *Crise de la zone euro: et si le pire était passé?*, in: *Le Monde*, 11.12.2011; M. WIEGEL, *Wahl zwischen zwei Arten von Europäern*, in: *FAZ*, 12.12.2011.
61. J.P. van den AKKER, *Maastricht het verdrag, the treaty*, Gemeente Maastricht, Maastricht, 2007.
62. See, e.g., *'L'Allemagne veut une Europe forte'*, in: *Le Monde*, 05.02.2017; *'Pas op mijn zeventigste toonde ik trots op Duitsland'*, in: *NRC Handelsblad*, 04.02.2017; M. STABENOW, *Abschiedsblick ins Ungewisse*, in: *FAZ*, 08.02.2017.

EC/EU often organizes summits that coincide with the anniversaries of newsworthy past events. In quite a few years since 1969, such summits exactly or nearly coincided with an anniversary of The Hague. Still, EC/EU institutions themselves did little to refer to this past, with obvious consequences for media reporting. In early December 1974, for instance, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* reported on a summit in Paris, but made no reference to the key summit held in the Dutch capital five years earlier. The same process repeated itself five years later.<sup>63</sup>

### Changes over time

The quantitative approach confirms that the selected news events have continuously been the most salient ones in the period under investigation. Obviously, each of them has its own rhythm. Interestingly, there is little evidence that “big” anniversaries, such as the 25<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, automatically attract more attention than other years. For the Treaties of Rome, for instance, the number of references in *Le Monde* was 18 in 1967, 15 in 1977, 12 in 1982 (25 years), 21 in 1987, 14 in 1997, 46 in 2007 and 18 in 2017; for the *Times*, 0 in 1967, 5 in 1977, 9 in 1982, 12 in 1987, 5 in 1997, 12 in 2007 and 13 in 2017. Having said this, the many phases in which the integration process was deemed to be in crisis – or in a particularly dynamic phase, such as in 1987, i.e. thirty years after the Treaties of Rome – explain why media coverage was not always much higher during “big” anniversaries in contrast to “smaller” commemorative dates.

More significant than the rhythms and peaks is therefore the fact that press coverage has remained remarkably stable over the past six decades. Of course, there are some variations. Firstly, and despite the qualifications introduced above, there is a certain tendency for news events to receive more coverage after full decades in comparison to the odd 15, 35, or 55 years, but this hardly alters the long-term trend of our news events media salience. The observable trend is that the Treaties of Rome were referred to more often on ten year anniversaries than on five year anniversaries and that references to the treaty in most of the media outlets included in this study peaked in the year 2007, the treaty’s fiftieth anniversary, with the exception of the *Times* which has maintained a more or less stable output and peaked in 2017.<sup>64</sup>

63. See, e.g., *Trotz Vorbehalten Londons lädt Frankreich zum Europa-Gipfeltreffen nach Paris*, in: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 30.11–01.12.1974; *Gipfelvorbereitung wird intensiviert*, in: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 02.12.1974; *EG-Gipfel kann sich über Senkung des britischen Beitrags nicht einigen*, in: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 01/02.12.1979.

64. The respective numbers for 2007 are: *Times*: 12 references, *Le Monde*: 46, *Le Figaro*: 34, *NRC Handelsblad*: 14. Apart from the *Times*, the *Guardian* also peaked in a different year with its 8 references in 1997 and only 3 references in 2007; a substantial difference in comparison to the other media outlets. The long-term stability of references to the ToR is confirmed when we look at the *Times*: 5 references in 1977, 12 references in 1987, 5 in 1997, 12 in 2007 and 13 references in 2017. This is also the case for *Le Monde*: 18 references in 1967, 15 in 1977, 21 in 1987, 14 in 1997, 46 in 2007, 18 in 2017.



Secondly, the Treaties of Rome were very rarely referred to during the very early years; in fact, there are no references to it in the *NRC Handelsblad*, the *Times*, *Le Figaro*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* or *Le Monde* in 1962.<sup>65</sup> This only started to change from 1967 onwards, and most clearly from the 1970s. The Maastricht Treaty, with its much broader legal powers and deeper implications, was highly present in many newspapers already five years after its conclusion. Articles, however, often did not refer to the anniversary at all, but simply mentioned the Maastricht Treaty because it mattered for day-to-day politics.<sup>66</sup> The Maastricht Treaty's political salience and its direct policy-related implications loomed large, and there was much less of a commemorative dimension.

Thirdly, there was a slight decrease in media coverage of the Treaty of Maastricht and the Schuman Declaration in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and this trend has continued for the Schuman Declaration also in recent years, such as 2010 and 2015. It will therefore be particularly interesting to see what kind of media interest it will attract in 2020 and in 2025, i.e. 70 and 75 years after the original event.<sup>67</sup> For the Maastricht Treaty, this slight decrease in the 2000s has been reversed with the renewed political salience (and crises) of the EU after the Lisbon Treaty and in the context of the global financial crisis after 2007 and the Eurozone crisis shortly after.<sup>68</sup>

In sum, therefore, the Schuman Declaration has faded into the background, but there is no indication that the Treaties of Rome (our second oldest news event) or the Maastricht Treaty are facing the same fate. Quite the contrary: citations and commemorative treatment has tended to increase over time, as the figures for 2007 and 2017 in particular reveal. The new relevance that the EU has gained – with the Lisbon Treaty, the Euro in crisis, the drawn-out debate about Grexit along with the Brexit referendum and its consequences – have given the EU more salience and, concomitantly, have increased the attention paid by the media to its history. Having said this, it is still too early to judge if this effect will be sustainable or if, by 2020/2022, the coverage will go back to the levels of earlier years.

65. This is in line with the findings of M. HERZER, *The Rise of Euro-journalism...*, op.cit., on the low intensity of reporting on the EC in the very first years.

66. See, e.g. the number of references for the period under study in 1997: *NRC Handelsblad*: 15, the *Times*: 20; the *Guardian*: 7; *Le Monde*: 21, *Le Figaro*: 8.

67. Examples for the Schuman Plan: *Le Monde*: 1965: 5, 1970: 6, 1975: 6, 1980: 1, 1985: 0, 1990: 1, 1995: 12, 2005: 3, 2010: 0, 2015: 0; *Times*: 1965: 1, 1970: 1, 1975: 1, 1980: 1, 1985: 0, 1990: 1, 1995: 0, 2000: 1, 2005: 0, 2010: 1, 2015: 0; *Guardian*: 0 references until 1995, 2000: 1, 2005: 0, 2010: 1, 2015: 0; *NRC Handelsblad*: 1975: 1, 1980: 0, 1985: 0, 1990: 0, 1995: 2, 2000: 2, 2005: 0, 2010: 0, 2015: 0.

68. The Treaty of Maastricht received most media attention in 1997, on an odd and not on a full anniversary, owing mostly to its political and not so much to its “commemorative” salience at the time. Figures for the various years for selected newspapers: *Le Monde*: 1997: 21, 2002: 4, 2007: 1, 2012: 7, 2017: 11; *Le Figaro*: 1997: 8, 2002: 3, 2007: 0, 2012: 1, 2017: 9; *Times*: 1997: 20, 2002: 2, 2007: 1, 2012: 0, 2017: 4; *Guardian*: 1997: 7, 2002: 1, 2007: 1, 2012: 2, 2017: 0; *NRC Handelsblad*: 1997: 15, 2002: 1, 2007: 2, 2012: 3, 2017: 1.



## Conclusion

As is well illustrated by the complex Brexit negotiations, today's European Union is impacting upon almost every aspect in the daily life of its citizens. Nevertheless, we see that public awareness and knowledge of the EU's history remain very limited. Moreover, scholars of collective memory have paid scant attention to the historical narratives that have been developed to account for the process of European integration. In an effort to put the analysis of the politics of EU remembrance on the scholarly agenda, we have analyzed the narratives of four milestones in the history of European integration in the period from 1960 to mid-2017. For the Schuman Declaration (1950), the Treaties of Rome (1957), The Hague summit (1969) and the Maastricht Treaty (1992), we have focused on how quality newspapers in France, (West) Germany, The Netherlands and the UK have been commemorating these major events. Combining a quantitative and a qualitative approach, we have not only examined which of these events have received most coverage but also have assessed the predominant tone of the narrative. We have thereby made a distinction between "commemorative" narratives emphasizing the commemoration of the particular issue in its own right and "political" narratives that primarily focus on the event's structural impact on European integration. The comparative approach across countries and newspapers furthermore has allowed us to explore why there were differences in reporting. A longitudinal approach made it possible to gain insight into how different narratives developed and changed over time.

Although our empirical investigation had a primarily exploratory character and has – as will be discussed below – certain limitations, it nevertheless allowed us to draw some preliminary conclusions. When it comes to the differences in coverage, both the qualitative and quantitative analysis clearly show that Treaties (the Treaties of Rome and the Maastricht Treaty) received more coverage than the summits. Since the former have important long-term implications and come with legally binding obligations, this is not surprising. The Treaties of Rome, which have laid the foundations for today's EU, are better represented than the Maastricht Treaty, which only introduced amendments to the existing Treaty framework. This difference in coverage also shows when we limit the comparison to the period from 1997 to 2017.

The picture arising from our analysis of the dominant narrative in the four cases is less clear-cut. The Treaties of Rome show a combination of both the commemorative and political approach, while the narratives on the Treaty of Maastricht are more focused on the long-term impact of the changes. This political approach is also predominant in the case of The Hague summit, while the reporting about the Schuman Declaration is more commemorative in nature. Our initial assumption, that the reporting about the summits would mostly adopt a commemorative approach while the treaties would lean towards a political narrative, has not been confirmed. Contrary to what we expected, the type of milestone (treaty *versus* summit) seems to have little predictive value for the likely character of the narrative.

As a second step, we examined the reasons for the differences in the narratives. Our pilot study shows that especially in the case of the commemorative narrative, the European institutions and in some cases also national and local actors have played an important role. In other words, it is not merely the press itself that determines the type of narrative but political actors who actively constructed news events and narratives around particular historical instances. In the case of the Treaties of Rome, for instance, the EU institutions and players like the Council Presidency have on several occasions used the anniversary of the Treaties as a means to give a new impetus to the European integration process, thereby feeding the press with a commemorative storyline. Also the fact that the anniversary of the Schuman Declaration became an official holiday for EU civil servants (1962) and was later institutionalised as 'Europe day' (1985) has strengthened the visibility of this event and prompted the media to report about this milestone in European history in a commemorative way.

Thirdly, the longitudinal approach of our pilot allowed us to also draw some preliminary conclusions about media coverage over time. Not surprisingly, big celebrations such as the 25<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary attracted more attention than other years, but not always. It took until the 1970s for the Treaties of Rome to gain media salience, while the Maastricht Treaty was already quite present five years after its conclusion. As we have seen above, these references were, however, more political in tone, while those to the Rome Treaties were both commemorative and political. We also discovered that press coverage varied over time. The decreased coverage of the Maastricht Treaty in the early 2000s was reversed in the context of the Eurozone crisis. This is not surprising since it was the Maastricht Treaty that introduced the Euro and many journalists went back to the original decision that laid the basis of this major development.

Despite these important findings, our approach has some limitations. For pragmatic reasons, we had to focus on a limited number of countries and on elite newspapers. There is broad scope for further research on the basis of our findings. Firstly, it would be important to understand further why some newspapers have reported more intensively on events associated with EU history than others. Our research reveals that in the German context, for instance, the *FAZ* referred to EU history more often than the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, and *Le Monde* more frequently than *Le Figaro*. Moreover, there are national variations. The role of Brussels correspondents and the set-up of newspapers, as well as their changes over time, would deserve closer scrutiny to explain these differences. Secondly, our long-term examination of seven newspapers made it impossible to provide a meticulous content analysis. This would require much more detailed research than a single article can present, also because the media system underwent fundamental change during the decades we analyze. Some media historians have stressed the transition from a rather conservative "consensus journalism" in the 1950s to a more critical approach in the 1960s and 1970s, when challenges to existing authorities loomed larger, whereas others have emphasized the

long-term continuities in Western European journalism.<sup>69</sup> Hence, the political and cultural context in which newspaper articles were published changed massively over time – as an issue that would deserve further attention. Some newspapers, such as the *Guardian*, also explicitly changed their stance vis-à-vis the EC during the period covered, complicating the picture further.<sup>70</sup> Such an analysis would, as a third desideratum, also help to clarify whether there are specific national narratives, whether there is a Europeanization of coverage over time, a split along a political left-right cleavage, or any other overriding trend.

In the material presented, we found traces of various developments. In the French press, for instance, the (French) Fouchet Plans were much more visible than in other countries – indicating that a national political context might matter. The most obvious instance of a strongly Europeanized form of coverage is the aforementioned article by British journalist Mark Rice-Oxley from March 2017 that was published in six European newspapers.<sup>71</sup> While other media analyses have demonstrated that this is not the first deliberate attempt to foster a genuinely pan-European debate, it is the only example in our set of sources.<sup>72</sup> An example for political cleavage comes from *Le Figaro*. With its centre-right political orientation, it for a long time dedicated little space to the Schuman Declaration of 9 May 1950, and instead highlighted the victory over Nazi Germany of 8 May 1945. National grandeur thus outpaced European reconciliation. This, however, changed over time, and increasing space was devoted to references to EU history. Methodologically, this is a reminder that newspaper articles should not be studied in isolation, but in the context of the general coverage of a newspaper, including their positioning, length, style, etc., as well as in the context of commemorative alternatives, such as the end of World War Two in relation to the Schuman Declaration.

Given the above limitations and the rather narrow scope of our investigation, it is clear that this research could only be of an exploratory nature. This being said, we consider it important that against a background of fierce debates about the future direction of the EU, scholars of European integration gain a better understanding of whether and how major steps in the historical development of the Union are remembered and through which type of narrative they are presented. Our methodology of studying the media visibility and salience over a long-term period, and comparing newspapers and news events, is time and labour intensive as it requires extensive

69. See, e.g., C. von HODENBERG, *Konsens und Krise. Eine Geschichte der westdeutschen Medienöffentlichkeit 1945–1973*, Wallstein, Göttingen, 2006; M. HERZER, *The Rise of Euro-journalism...*, op.cit.

70. M. HERZER, *The Rise of Euro-journalism...*, op.cit., pp.31–34.

71. M. RICE-OXLEY, *The EU is 60 – and it helped my generation fall in love with Europe*, in: *Guardian*, 23.03.2017; see, e.g., also M. RICE-OXLEY, *Traité de Rome: Bon anniversaire, l'UE! Vraiment désolé de ne pas être de la fête*, in: *Le Monde*, 25.03.2017.

72. See, also on the question of what “Europeanization” would mean in this context, e.g. C. KANTNER, *War and Intervention in the Transnational Public Sphere: Problem-Solving and European Identity-Formation*, Routledge, London, 2015; T. RISSE, *A Community of Europeans? Transnational Identities and Public Spheres*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 2010; J.-H. MEYER, *The European Public Sphere...*, op.cit.

archival research. Still, we hope that this article shows that it provides an important new avenue for gaining insights into an under researched field of European integration.